



Director of
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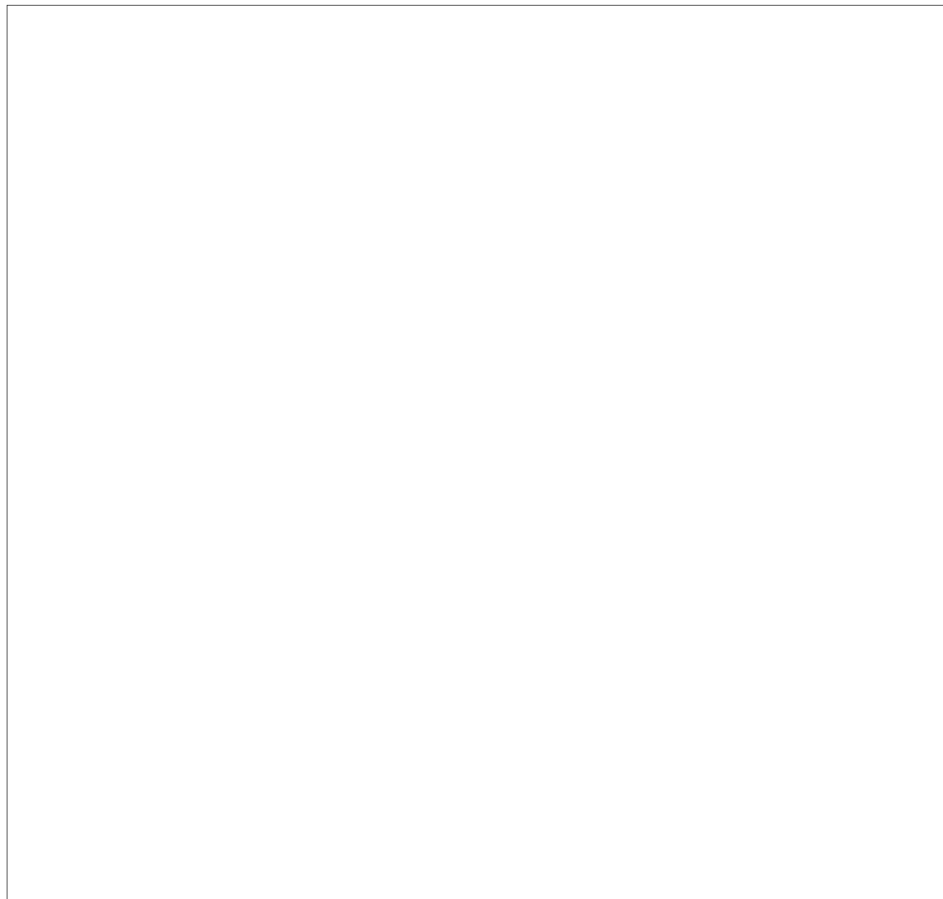
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SOUTH AFRICA: Non-Proliferation Treaty Talks Stall

South Africa's tough terms for acceding to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and admission that it can produce nuclear weapons will hurt its chances for staying in the International Atomic Energy Agency but strengthen the government domestically.

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In Vienna last week South Africa made no commitment to accede to the NPT in talks with the US, the USSR, and the UK.

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Foreign Minister

Pik Botha was particularly incensed, according to press reports, over passage by the US House of Representatives last week of a more restrictive sanctions bill. While in Vienna, he chose to confirm South Africa's nuclear weapons capability in a press interview.

(b)(3)

Comment: Significant obstacles to South Africa's accession to the NPT remain, and prospects for Pretoria's ouster from the IAEA at next month's general conference have increased. An eleventh-hour statement on the NPT prevented South Africa's suspension last year and led to last week's talks. Pretoria seems willing to risk its membership and probably would withdraw from the Agency if it were faced with an imminent suspension vote.

(b)(3)

South Africa is probably concerned that accession to the NPT at this time would create a damaging political backlash just before nationwide municipal elections on 26 October. The conservative opposition favors keeping the nuclear weapons option and has already criticized the President for jeopardizing the program by considering the Treaty.

(b)(3)

The remarks Botha made to the press about Pretoria's weapons capability are consistent with the Intelligence Community's belief and constitute the most categorical official statement to date. Botha's timing may have less to do with the NPT talks than with regional developments in southern Africa. Pretoria may wish to temper concessions on Angola and Namibia with a reminder of its nuclear potential.

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